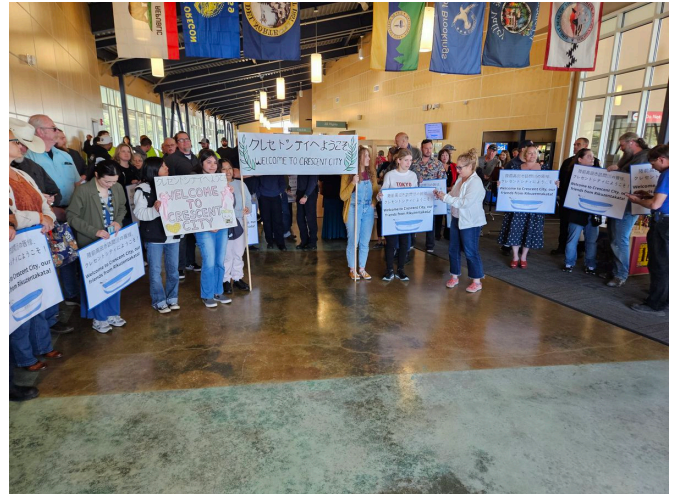


Japan has Arrived: Sister City relationship flourishes

April 30, 2024





The atmosphere surrounding the 11th anniversary of The Kamome Festival was inspiring, exhilarating, uplifting and joyful but most of all, definitely the flavor and theme was international. The City put on quite a welcome (Moshi! Moshi!) for the Japanese Delegation from Rikuzentakata. A deep, respectful bow and tip of the boshi (Japanese word for hat) to the City, County and Kamome Foundation for a wonderful welcome to our Japanese guests.

From the devastation of the horrific March 11, 2011 Tsunami, following the Tohoku Earthquake which took the lives of over 2000 folks living along the northeast coast of Japan, a joyous event was born. The souls whose lives were extinguished by the giant waves of the Tsunami, live on within the hearts and memories of survivors on both sides of the vast Pacific.

The Rikuzentakata School-owned vessel incredibly survived the two plus years, a 6000 mile journey floating across the Pacific and landing along the Del Norte coast and covered bow to stern with hitchhiking barnacles. The Kamome was rescued by a group of Del Norte youth ...and the Journey commenced to return the miracle vessel to its rightful owners.

A very special bond was born a decade back, perhaps by serendipity and geography from this human tragedy between the two schools, the City of Crescent City, the County of Del Norte and Rikuzentakata, Japan. This week-end, the Kamome Festival was celebrated from Asia to North America, Japan to The United States, Rikuzentakata to Crescent City with international flavor from Southeast Asia, Latin America and the USA. The Kamome Foundation was founded and flourishes.

Day 1:

About 100 Del Norters, with signage and a sea of smiles came out to the Del Norte County Regional Airport and greeted the Japanese Delegation for the Kamome Festival last week. The Delegation came to celebrate,

bond, share, and exchange goodwill and a seemingly endless quantity of Sister City love and joy. It was heartwarming and humbling to observe this jubilant event this past weekend.

Days 2 and 3:

Those who attended the Festival were treated to cultural activities, international dance performances, food, and no shortage of mutual admiration from politicians to performers. If only this love could be exported around the globe to some of the deeply dire trouble spots.

Emily Reed from the Tolowa Nation delivered a Tolowa prayer and was the first to welcome the Delegation and share the culture of the Tolowa Tribe, its rich Del Norte history atop the soil of the Cultural Center site situated on Tribal land. Mayor Inscore followed with the City's welcome. The Mayor welcomed his Japanese counterpart, Mayor Sasaki who in both Japanese and English (with a little help from his interpreter Jack Woodke) expressed his deep appreciation to Crescent City and Del Norte County for its extension of hospitality to the Delegation.

Bill Steven, president of the Kamome Foundation shared the contributions of local youth who thanklessly worked diligently to remove the barnacles from the dinghy and initiate its return to the people of Rikunzentakata, no small feat. "We didn't expect anything. We just wanted to do the right thing, something nice." And indeed they did. Steven underscored no local dollars were expended from City or County coffers in developing the Kamome Foundation.

Both Friday and Saturday, the Public enjoyed a myriad of activities. Kids experienced tsunami interactive education while families learned helpful tips on Emergency Preparedness, emergency First Aid kit making, Origami, Kanji Writing and Card Making. In the evening, UNIT SOUZA entertained with "Constant State of Otherness."

Saturday, a Drum Circle was performed by Mombo Hernandez. The Hmong Community provided three dance ensembles:

- Crescent Elk Middle School International Club presented traditional Hmong dance.
- Former DNHS high grads,
- "Las Chicanas," performed a traditional Mexican dance. The Chicano Club dancers are also members of the Del Norte Asian/ American Club.
- Lotus Cultural Dance group from Eureka performed a traditional Laotian cultural dance. Local DNUSD teacher Hmong Khou Vue.
- The afternoon was capped off by HAPI, the Humboldt Asia Pacific Islander Taiko Percussion Drum group with a riveting and rhythmic performance on the Cultural Center stage.

This international contribution to the Kamome Festival was organized and presented by a team of dedicated Kamomrle Foundation members.

By the time you read this article, the Delegation will be back in Japan via CEC to Oakland, van transfer to SFO, a 12 hour flight to Tokyo and bullet train back to Rikuzentakata, rich with cerebral memories of the Kamome Festival in Crescent City, April 11-13, 2024.

Until next year, Sayonara.